

MAGNANIMITY

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PERSONALITY

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Abraham Lincoln's Personality

Magnanimity

Excerpts from newspapers and other
sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

ANECDOTE OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN.—Rev. Mr. Bingham, who has been a missionary to the Sandwich Islands for the past forty-six years, in the course of a sermon delivered in Plymouth Church last Sunday evening, related an anecdote of the late President Lincoln, which we believe has never before been made public. A son of the native chief in the Micronesian Islands had been captured and carried off by the crew of a South American vessel. The chief was terribly enraged, and swore that in retaliation he would slaughter and devour the next American who should step upon shore. It happened that the first who landed was the mate of a United States whaler, who had come ashore for provisions. He was seized and bound, and the savage chief would have executed his purpose but for the interference of the missionaries, one of whom was a son of Mr. Bingham. After using argument and persuasion without avail, they appealed to his cupidity, asking what they should give him to release the man. He demanded a boat. One of the missionaries had a very valuable boat, which had been sent him by a friend in Charleston, Mass. He offered that to save the sailor's life; but the natives of their party objected, and proposed to substitute a musket, which the chief finally consented to take, and the man was released. The story came to the ears of Mr. Lincoln, and he immediately sent, from his private purse, five hundred dollars in gold to the missionaries who had saved the life of an American sailor.

LINCOLN THE MAN OF PEACE.

Though Abraham Lincoln was the head of a government which waged to a successful conclusion the greatest war in history, with the single exception of the current war in Europe, he was a man of peace.

Certain impetuous men profess to have lost patience with Woodrow Wilson because he so carefully watches his step lest it lead him into war. What would have been their state of mind had they lived in the early 60s and seen Lincoln turn the other cheek to the south and give utterance to the soft word in a vain effort to turn away its wrath.

The south was in a state of insurrection when Lincoln assumed the presidency on March 4, 1861. Seven states had announced their withdrawal from the union and set up a government of their own. They had elected Jefferson Davis president. They had organized a congress and established a capital at Montgomery, Ala. They had set up an army and done what they could to provide themselves with a navy. On all sides was activity in the way of preparations for war. Senators and representatives had left Washington to do service at Montgomery. Officers who had been trained at West Point for service in defense of the flag had become deserters for the purpose of taking up arms against it. Forts had been captured and arsenals gutted. Can anyone imagine those who today are bewailing President Wilson's policy of caution and moderation keeping their patience with President Lincoln while he pleaded with the south to come back into the union in the face of such treason?

On the eve of March 4 the air of Washington was thick with dark rumors—of plots to seize the capital, to prevent the inauguration and even to assassinate Lincoln. The situation was calculated to call forth defiant language, but Lincoln's inaugural address was utterly lacking in expressions of a militant nature. Lincoln, the man of peace, did not thirst for the blood of the south; he wanted its heart and its hand. Lincoln's one thought was to perpetuate the union and he fervently hoped to be able to do it without war.

"I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the states where it now exists," Lincoln assured the south. And it is to be remembered that the north was full of antislavery radicals who had hailed John Brown as one of the heroes of the age when he attempted to free the slaves by force of arms.

"The property, peace and security of no section are to be in anywise endangered by the now incoming administration," went on Lincoln. "To the extent of my ability I shall take care, as the constitution itself expressly enjoins me, that the laws of

the union be faithfully executed in all the states," he said, but—"In doing this there need be no bloodshed nor violence, and there shall be none unless it be forced upon the national authority." In conclusion he told his "dissatisfied fellow countrymen" that the momentous issues of civil war were in their hands, not his—that the government would not assail them—that there would be no conflict unless they were the aggressors. Everything he said and did on March 4, 1861, bespoke a hope for continued peace as had everything he had said and done between election day and inauguration day, while under Buchanan the south was laying the foundation for its armed defense of secession.

During the weeks of seeming inactivity after the inauguration, the impatience of the people of the north asserted itself. Why should the government remain idle and submissive in face of the flagrant incorrigibility of the south? Could it remain inactive and maintain its self respect? Why did it not bring the rebels to time? If the union were to be upheld, why did not the president uphold it? There were loud cries for an invasion of the seceded states and coercion on the part of the government at Washington. Yet Lincoln remained unmoved. Then came the attack on Fort Sumter—and war. But it was war in spite of all the resourcefulness and all the patience and all the magnanimity and all the prayers of Abraham Lincoln, the man of peace.

It's Foolish To "Get Even"

by JOHN PRENTISS

NO MATTER what you do or where you go, you'll run into injustice now and then. You may be tempted to seek revenge — "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," you know. It is perfectly normal, perfectly human to do so.

You will find it hard to live up to the advice I am about to give you, when I tell you that the best rule of life is to forget revenge entirely.

One man, now successful and rich, told me: "I never in my life felt wealthy enough to afford the luxury of getting even. Besides, I never had to: time always took care of that for me."

When Disraeli was climbing to power in England — eventually, as you know, he was Prime Minister — he made enemies right and left. Aggressive, impertinent, and an upstart into the bargain, he was detested.

When he became Prime Minister, he could have had all the revenge needed to satisfy any man. He refused to take any of it. His rule: "I never seek revenge. When a man wrongs me, I write his name

on a slip of paper and put the slip into a desk drawer. It's amazing how quickly the men whose names are on my slips fade from the picture."

Or consider great and godlike Abraham Lincoln. He was another man with many a wrong to redress. When he was making his way upward, because he was awkward, ungainly, and seemed to have no future, everyone took cracks at him. Stanton publicly insulted him. When Lincoln was on his way to the Douglas debates, he rode in the caboose. In General McClellan's private car up ahead, rode Stephen A. Douglas.

YET WHEN Lincoln came out of obscurity and became President, he could have flayed Stanton and humbled McClellan. He could have "got even in a big way." Did he do it? He honored both his detractors by putting them into high positions.

It's bitter medicine to take at times when someone insults you, but if you forget revenge, forget it entirely, you will get farther ahead.

Lincoln's Love for Pickett Led Him to Home of Honored Foe

By The Associated Press

1927

SPRINGFIELD, Ill., Nov. 26.—A simple episode revealing the tenderness of Abraham Lincoln and his friendship for the Confederate general George Pickett, whom he knew as a boy in Quincy, Ill., is retold in "The Illinois State Register" by Thomas Rees, its publisher.

Mr. Rees took his story from a letter written by General Pickett's widow to Charles U. Gordon, of Greenville, Miss., declining with regrets an invitation to attend a Southern States Republican League celebration at Lincoln's last birthday anniversary. The letter says:

"The name of Abraham Lincoln, wherever it may occur, recalls a scene from my window in the old Pickett home at the corner of Sixth and Leigh Streets in Richmond on a day in early April after the surrender of our armies. A carriage passing by my home was surrounded by guards and followed by a retinue of soldiers. After it had passed, the cavalcade paused and a man alighted from the carriage and came back to our house. Hearing his knock, I opened the door with my baby

in my arms and saw a tall, gaunt and sad-faced man who asked:

"Is this George Pickett's place?"

"Yes, sir, but he is not here."

"I know that, ma'am, but I just wanted to see the place. Down in old Quincy, Ill., I have heard the lad describe the home. I am Abraham Lincoln."

"The President," I gasped.

"The stranger shook his head.

"No, ma'am, just Abraham Lincoln, George Pickett's old boyhood friend."

"I am George Pickett's wife and this is his baby."

"It had been long since my baby had seen a man and, being reminded of his own father, reached out his hands to Mr. Lincoln, who took him in his arms, an expression of almost divine love glorifying his face. My baby opened his mouth wide and insisted on giving his father's friend a dewy baby kiss. Putting the little one back in my arms, Mr. Lincoln said:

"Tell your father, the rascal, that I forgive him for the sake of that kiss and those bright eyes."

LINCOLN THE HUMAN.

^{N. Y. Times} Each recurring Lincoln's Birthday ²⁻¹²⁻²⁸ gives occasion to note afresh his mounting fame throughout the world. Never were his words oftener quoted than today; never his example more frequently held up to statesmen. Praise has been showered upon him from every quarter of the world. Among the English-speaking orators of the nineteenth century he is accorded first place by English authorities. Only recently General MAURICE has stressed the fact that LINCOLN, while doubtless not possessing the military genius ascribed to him by NICOLAY and HAY, worked out in the most satisfactory form possible the great problem of control of the army by the civil power in time of war. All these foreign tributes fall gratefully on American ears, but what we of LINCOLN'S own country most cherish is the accumulated proof of his wide and tolerant humanity. We know that his gifts for public service were rich and fruitful. But we grow, year by year, surest of all that he was even more fully dowered with the finest qualities of our poor human nature. This was the thing which LOWELL had in mind when he wrote of LINCOLN:

His was no lonely mountain-peak of
mind,
Thrusting to thin air o'er our cloudy
bars,
A sea-mark now, now lost in vapors
blind;
Broad prairie rather, genial, level-lined,
Fruitful and friendly for all human-
kind.

LINCOLN'S magnanimity has often been a theme of admiration and wonder. It is touched upon again by the Southerner who writes in the February Scribner's of LINCOLN and the Civil War. It is an article critical of LINCOLN'S course at the outbreak of the war, but fully appreciative of the extraordinary kindness, patience, and large-mindedness of his treatment of the South. Never in a public utterance, or in private, so far as is known, did he make railing accusations against the leaders of the Confederacy, least of all against the Southern people. But this was only of a piece with LINCOLN'S general character.

He never harbored political resentments, even when he had been badly treated. He thought that the statute of limitations against such offenses should be very short. And the bearing of any personal grudges was repugnant to his whole nature. This may have been partly due to natural endowment; but it was more the result of a good-humored and wise survey of the frailties and follies, as well as the essential virtues, of mankind. A phrase said to have been often on his lips was, "Why should the spirit of mortal be proud?" With every temptation to exalt himself above the weaker men in the Government, LINCOLN was always considerate, always modest while firm; and in his numberless individual contacts showed himself that sweet-natured and magnanimous man whom his countrymen have increasing reason to delight to honor as "new birth of our new soil, the first American."

LINCOLN'S GREATNESS

Declared Not Due to Saintly Qualities.

The present day tendency to exalt the sentimental side of Abraham Lincoln's nature, and to overlook those qualities which really raised him above the ranks of ordinary men, is deplored by an editorial in Liberty.

"Each year Lincoln's birthday finds us with something new to add to the growing tradition of the Great Emancipator," explains the editorial. "One of the stories now is that, in Lincoln's early days, a young man named George Pickett told him that he (Pickett) wanted to be a soldier. The result was Pickett's appointment as a cadet at West Point.

"Years passed (so the story goes) and the fortunes of war brought Lincoln, the President, to the capital of the defeated Confederacy. Down a quiet Richmond street he went to a house where a woman waited with her baby. After a few friendly greetings Lincoln kissed the child and went on. The home in Richmond was that of the rebel general, George Pickett.

"From these episodes the chronicler, who got the tale from Mrs. Pickett, reaches the conclusion that 'Lincoln was big enough and broad enough, even' after, Pickett had turned against the very government and man who had given him his military education, to forgive him—because he had kissed his baby.'

"It is not well," concludes the editorial, "to make Lincoln too much of a saint. Anyway, it is not accurate. The real Lincoln was a pretty shrewd politician and lawyer. It is a good thing for this country that he was."

PITTSBURG PA. PRESS
JULY 20, 1929

The Chivalry of Abraham Lincoln

His Most Outstanding Trait

GARARD REVIEW, NOV. 1929

A GALLANT artillery officer under Lee, who after the Civil War took up his home in the West and became a distinguished judge, reading a biography of Lincoln, exclaimed: "I am quite surprised. I always thought Lincoln a man of rather coarse fiber, though of great good nature, but I find that he had a sweetness and fineness of feeling and a spirit of chivalry possessed by few men."

Those, indeed, were the outstanding traits of Lincoln's character.

Once when riding upon a stage, his fellow passengers were convulsed with laughter on seeing a small pig caught fast in the mud in a ditch by the roadside and squealing and struggling to free himself. But Mr. Lincoln had a different feeling. Leaping from the stage, he waded into the mud over his shoe tops and, picking the little animal up, set it upon solid ground.

"Now, look here," said a fellow passenger to whom he had remarked a moment before that there was no such thing as complete unselfishness, "you cannot say that was a selfish act."

"Extremely selfish," replied Mr. Lincoln. "If I had left that little fellow in the mud, the memory of his squealing would have made me uncomfortable all day."

Upon receiving the news of his nomination as President, he got up at once, remarking to the company of men who were congratulating him, "I reckon there's a little woman down at our house that would like to hear the news," and started with rapid strides for home.

After the fall of Richmond, Lincoln visited that city and while there looked for the home of the famous Confederate cavalry officer, Pickett, whom he had known intimately years before in Illinois. "Is this where George Pickett lives?" he asked of a woman

with a baby in her arms, who answered the door. She said it was and that she was Mrs. Pickett. Telling her who he was, he said he came not as President but simply "as Abraham Lincoln, George's old friend." He took the little one in his arms and thus did his true nobility of character restore the union in one heart.

If there was anything that put a strain upon Lincoln's innate courtesy, it was the nagging importunity of office seekers. One day, when he was out walking and in conversation with a friend, one of them intruded and presented a paper. Mr. Lincoln turned on him with, "My man, don't annoy me this way. I have too much to think of," and passed on with his companion. After they had walked a short distance, he suddenly wheeled about and overtaking the man, whom he found in quite a dejected attitude, said, "My friend, I was rude to you just now; I ask your pardon. I have a great deal to worry me but I had no right to treat you so discourteously. Take this card and come to my office in the morning."

Once, after Lincoln had been grossly maligned, someone came to him with a statement of the facts, which he believed would set the matter in its true light and which he wanted to print in some paper. "Oh, no," replied Mr. Lincoln, "if I were to try to return, much less answer, all the attacks made on me, this office might as well be closed for any other business. I do the very best I can; and I

mean to keep on doing so until the end. If the end brings me out all right, what is said against me won't amount to anything. If the end brings me out wrong, ten angels swearing I was right will make no difference."

No one other than a thorough-going gentleman could have written the famous letter to Mrs. Bixby, which follows:

"Dear Madam — I have been shown, in the files of the War Department, a statement of the Adjutant-General of Massachusetts, that you are the mother of five sons who have died gloriously on the field of battle.

"I feel how weak and fruitless must be any words of mine which should attempt to beguile you from a loss so overwhelming. But I cannot refrain from tendering to you the consolation that may be found in the thanks of the Republic they died to save.

"I pray that our Heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement, and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom.

"Yours, very sincerely and respectfully,
"Abraham Lincoln."

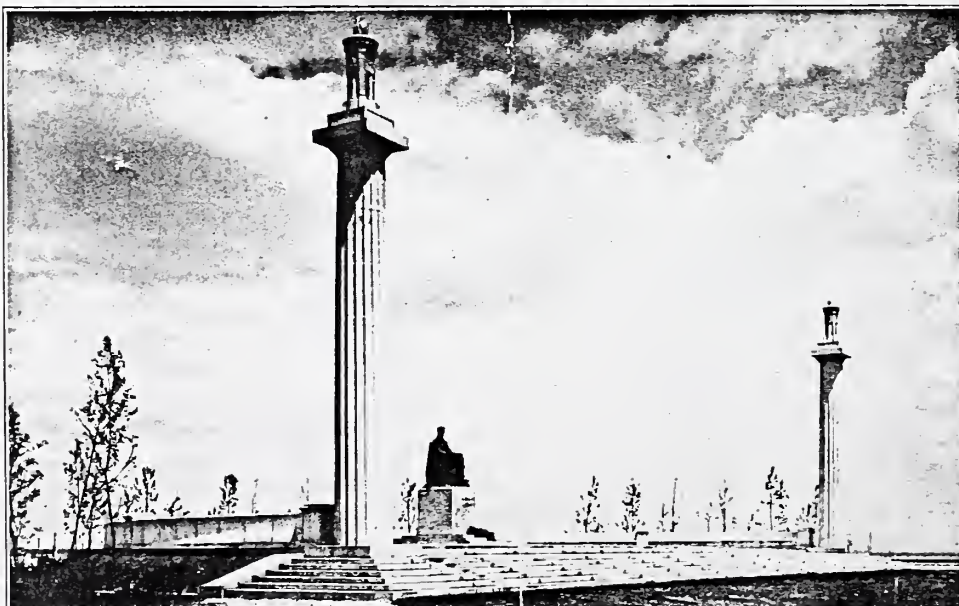
After the death of his son, Will, Lincoln was sitting alone reading *King John*, when he came upon this passage:

"And, Father Cardinal, I have heard you say

That we shall see and know our friends in heaven:

If that be true, I shall see my boy again."

Calling his aide, he repeated the words and then said: "Colonel, did you ever dream of a lost friend, and feel that you were holding sweet communion with that friend, and



ST. GAUDEN'S STATUE OF LINCOLN IN GRANT PARK

Continued on
Next Page

yet have a sad consciousness that it was not a reality? Just so I dream of my boy Willie." Overcome with emotion, he dropped his head on the table, and sobbed aloud.

After Appomattox, when a great company gathered to celebrate and the band played all sorts of patriotic airs—*Columbia the Gem of the Ocean*, *Star Spangled Banner* and others—Mr. Lincoln said to the band leader, "Play *Dixie*. Now it's ours."

So throughout his whole life, always the chivalrous gentleman.

LINCOLN LORE

Bulletin of the Lincoln National Life Foundation - - - - - Dr. Louis A. Warren, Editor.
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June 4, 1934

MAGNANIMITY—A CONTRIBUTING FACTOR TO LINCOLN'S RENOWN

Abraham Lincoln's attitude towards those who were opposed to him and his policies demonstrates one of the most unusual traits of character in this outstanding world figure. His magnanimity often brought upon him the reproach of his political allies, as he was openly accused, upon becoming president, of giving the most desirable appointments to his opponents.

When his cabinet had been so reorganized as to contain four Democrats and three Republicans, his political advisors complained that he had given the opposition the majority, to which it is said he calmly replied that he was there to make it even.

One of the most pointed evidences of Lincoln's hesitancy to do anything that would appear like malice was his attitude toward Colfax who is said to have favored Douglas over Lincoln in the senatorial campaign of 1858. After Lincoln had appointed Smith to a place in the cabinet for which Colfax had been a candidate, Lincoln wrote to Colfax explaining his attitude:

"A tender of the appointment was not withheld, in any part, because of anything happening in 1858. Indeed, I should have decided as I did easier than I did, had that matter never existed . . . I now have to beg that you will not do me the injustice to suppose for a moment that I remember anything against you in malice."

In the matter of minor appointments Lincoln did not allow opposition to him within the party ranks to prejudice his decisions. He had made the promise of some office to Walter Davis, and Herndon wrote about it and received this reply from Lincoln:

"I understand, he is of good character, is one of the young men, is of the mechanics, and always faithful, and never troublesome, a Whig and is poor, with the support of a widow-mother thrown almost exclusively on him by the death of his brother. If these are wrong reasons, then I have been wrong; but I have certainly not been selfish in it, because, in my greatest need of friends, he was against me and for Baker."

Lincoln wrote in an autograph book upon one occasion these words: "Consider if you know any good thing that no man desires for himself." There was one thing that Lincoln greatly desired for himself in 1849 and that was the Land Office. There has been much controversy over his attitude in this matter, and the correspondence with reference to it allows us to appraise his sentiments.

On April 7, 1849, Lincoln wrote that he had promised to secure the appointment of Cyrus Edwards to the General Land Office and later on in agreement with Baker subscribed to other arrangements that might be made between Edwards and another candidate. "In relation to these pledges," Lincoln wrote, "I must not only be chaste but above suspicion." It finally developed that the administration would not appoint Edwards and was anxious that Lincoln himself be appointed. Lincoln reacted as follows: "If the office could be secured to Illinois by my consent to accept it and not otherwise, I give that consent."

— After Edwards and Lincoln had both been rejected and Butterfield appointed to the rather lucrative office, Lincoln wrote a long letter to Gillespie from which the following excerpts are copied:

"The better part of one's life consists of his friendships; and, of them, mine with Mr. Edwards was one of the most cherished. I have not been false to it. At a word

I could have had the office any time before the Department was committed to Mr. Butterfield—at least Mr. Ewing and the President say as much. That word I forbore to speak, partly for other reasons, but chiefly for Mr. Edwards' sake—losing the office that he might gain it, I was always for; but to lose his friendship, by the effort for him, would oppress me very much, were I not sustained by the utmost consciousness of rectitude . . . I intended to keep, and now believe I did keep, Mr. Edwards above myself . . . I wish the office had been so bestowed as to encourage our friends in future contests, and I regret Mr. Edwards' feelings towards me. These two things away, I should have no regrets—at least I think I would not."

Some of Lincoln's friends were indignant that Butterfield received the appointment over Lincoln, and one of them took occasion in the Illinois Legislature to make an attack on Butterfield and Mr. Ewing who had worked hard for Butterfield's success. In a letter to the editor of the *Chicago Journal* Lincoln, commenting on this speech, wrote as follows:

"When Mr. Butterfield was appointed Commissioner of the Land Office, I expected him to be an able and faithful officer, and nothing has since come to my knowledge disappointing that expectation. As to Mr. Ewing, his position has been one of great difficulty. I believe him, too, to be an able and faithful officer. A more intimate acquaintance with him would probably change the views of most of those who have complained of him."

There is a sequel to the Land Office story which reveals still further Lincoln's magnanimity. A member of Congress representing the Chicago district asked for an appointment in the army on behalf of a son of Mr. Butterfield. Arnold, a friend of Lincoln, claims that when the application was presented the President paused a moment and then said:

"Mr. Justin Butterfield once obtained an appointment I very much wanted, and in which my friends believed I could have been useful, and to which they thought I was fairly entitled, and I have hardly ever felt so bad at any failure in my life, but I am glad of an opportunity of doing a service to his son."

Lincoln's attitude towards his subordinate officers during the war also furnished many instances of his magnanimity. Before Lincoln met General Grant he wrote him a letter complimenting him on his success at Vicksburg. Lincoln had differed with Grant as to the method of attack and in the concluding sentence wrote:

"I now wish to make the personal acknowledgment that you were right and I was wrong."

In the famous letter to General Hooker, Lincoln wrote:

"I have placed you at the head of the Army of the Potomac . . . I have heard, in such way as to believe it, of your recently saying that both the army and the Government needed a dictator. Of course it was not for this, but in spite of it, that I have given you the command. Only those generals who gain successes can set up dictators."

It is in the concluding paragraph of the Second Inaugural Address that we find the best expression of Abraham Lincoln's magnanimity which sounded a new and unheard note in military statesmanship:

WITH MALICE TOWARDS NONE;
WITH CHARITY FOR ALL.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 1935.

**A Weakness of Lincoln's That
Needs Pointing Out.**

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—Sir:
I have waited in vain for some of the eulogists of Lincoln to mention a point in his disfavor. Yet it ought to be mentioned. He let himself be imposed on. He listened to every mother who wanted to save her soldier son from being shot. He was not above collecting, counting and impounding the pay of a Negro porter ill in the hospital. He let McClellan write saucy letters to him and he let Stanton say mean, cutting things about him. He repaid the machinations of Chase by appointing the man to the Supreme Court. He let people, the plain, ordinary people of these United States, tramp through the executive offices, take him by the hand, task his strength, ask him questions.

Isn't it strange, in a world that has always had so abundant a supply of pride, that Lincoln had so little? Isn't it odd that a man should be reckoned great who had so little of a common human quality? Why, I have known many a clerk in a store or for a public utility, many a little two-by-four politician who used up enough pride in ten minutes to keep Abe Lincoln supplied for a lifetime. It must have been an annoying weakness to Lincoln, for he couldn't help knowing that it was one that did not hamper many of his fellow mortals.

E. H. B.

New York, February 14.

New York Sun

SHORT SERMON FOR TODAY

By Rev. John R. Gunn

'Now, He Belongs To The Ages'

"Be not overcome of evil,
but overcome evil with good."
—Rom. xii: 21.

"A man cannot get above the atmosphere in which he was born," said Wendell Phillips, speaking of Lincoln, who, he said, was Kentucky-honest —a very different thing from Massachusetts or New York honesty. That was a knock at Kentucky and Lincoln. We have the highest regard for that brand of honesty which "Honest Abe" embodied. If his Kentucky environment was conducive to a low standard of honesty, he rose above it.

Kentuckians have been noted for harboring grudges and feuds. But Lincoln never succumbed to that sort of thing, neither in Kentucky nor after he went to Washington, which is also somewhat noted for harboring grudges and feuds. Talking one day with an associate in the White House, Lincoln said: "You have more of that feeling of personal resentment than I have. Perhaps I have too little of it, but I never thought it paid." Lincoln was too great, too magnanimous, to be resentful.

Writing of the magnanimity of Lincoln, Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick said: "Stanton called Lincoln 'a low, cunning clown,' nicknamed him 'the original gorilla,' said Du Chaillu was a fool to wander all the way to Africa in search of what he could so easily have found at Springfield, Illinois. Then Lincoln, who knew well what Stanton had said, made Stanton Secretary of War because he was the best man for the place. Years afterward that same Stanton stood at the bedside of the martyred President in the little room across the street from Ford's theater and, looking at the silent face, said, 'There lies the greatest ruler of men the world has ever had.'"

Truly great men are too great to be resentful.

It can be said of Lincoln, as Emerson said of another great man: "His heart was as great as the world; there was no room in it to hold the memory of a wrong."

Time is confirming more and more the remark made of Lincoln in the hour of his martyrdom: "Now, he belongs to the ages."

Ft. Wayne J. C.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 1951

*
* * May 24, 1974
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*"I shall do nothing through malice;
what I deal with is too vast for malice."*

- Abraham Lincoln

Carl Sandburg tells the story of an Illinois man who asked Lincoln how he liked being President. Lincoln answered, "Well, I'm like the man they rode out of town on a rail. He said if it wasn't for the honor of it he would just as soon walk."

Any man who could compare the job of being President to riding out of town on a rail must have had his share of political abuse. We can imagine that Lincoln occasionally was tempted to be vindictive and malicious. Anyone in a position of administrative leadership, particularly in public life, faces such temptations.

Lincoln mentions malice in several of his speeches. Perhaps he was speaking to himself, as well as to the Nation, when he said: "With malice toward none, with charity for all..."

If Lincoln was able to become magnanimous rather than malicious it may have been because he was able to see his life in terms of the larger dimension of the Nation's progress and the quest of human liberty. This gave him a perspective which prevented pettiness. We catch this mood when he says, "...what I deal with is too vast for malice."

"Too vast!" Here was a man who could stand at Gettysburg and say the world would "little note nor long remember" his own words, but it would "never forget" the struggle of the "living and dead" who had "hallowed this ground." He saw the large dimensions. In the Pennsylvania hills he could see the landscapes of history. In the wide prairies he had felt the sweeping winds of the freedom of the people. He knew the vast expanses of the human enterprise.

It may be that a feeling for the dimensions of life is the heart of all wisdom. This is why wisdom often seems a separate thing from schooling and education. At times our specialties, which are necessary in their place, tend to make us forget the vastness of history, humanity, the universe itself.

There are times to turn to the fields, to the stars, to the restless pounding of the sea. There are times to turn again to the older books, the classic texts. We need the sense of the vast dimension. Psalm 84 reflects this mood: "How lovely is thy dwelling place, O Lord of hosts!...Blessed are those whose strength is in thee, in whose hearts are the highways to Zion."

- Burton Cantrell
Director, The Wesley Foundation
82 East 16th Avenue
Columbus, Ohio

* Distributed each week to faculty at The Ohio State University *
Wesley Foundation - United Christian Center...two buildings, united program

Opinion

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The Journal-Gazette Monday, January 3, 1983



Sydney Harris: Abe's generosity missing in politics

Reminiscence is a weakness of the old, and it's not often that I indulge in it, but the recent election, with its bitterness and insult amounting to slander, reminded me of the last time I saw Carl Sandburg when he was visiting some of his old haunts in Chicago.

Then, too, it was just after an ugly election, and Carl, who had recently finished his massive biography of Abraham Lincoln, was contrasting the generosity of Abe with the pettiness and acrimony of the modern political scene.

In Lincoln's day, when he was a candidate for the state legislature, it was customary in Illinois for the rival candidates to barnstorm together around the district. On one such occasion, he had driven out from Springfield with a political opponent to engage in a joint debate, and they traveled in his opponent's carriage.

Addressing the farmers who had gathered to meet them, Lincoln began by saying, "I am too poor to own a carriage, but my opponent has generously invited me to ride with him. I want you to vote for me if you will, but if not, then vote for my opponent, for he is a fine man." Would any candidate today have the graciousness to express himself in this manner?

Even in war, Lincoln was more lenient toward his enemies than

most politicians are in peace. At the end of the Civil War, Sandburg recounted, Gen. Grant, well aware of Lincoln's tender side, asked him point-blank what was to be done with Jefferson Davis, the president of the Confederacy. "Should we try to capture him, or let him escape from the country if he can?"

Lincoln replied, as he so often did, with a story — this one about the Irishman who had taken the pledge from Father Murphy, but got terribly thirsty and applied to a bartender for a lemonade. While it was being prepared, he whispered to the bartender, "And could ye put a little brandy in it, all unbeknown to meself?" Lincoln then told Grant if he could let Jeff Davis escape, "all unbeknown to him," to let him go, because "I don't want him."

Indeed, even at the height of the hostilities, Lincoln once uttered a few kind words about the Confederates, and a woman in the audience stood up and demanded to know how he could speak kindly of his enemies when he should rather destroy them.

Lincoln paused, and then drawled, "What, madam, do I not destroy them when I make them my friends?" And this was the president who was accused of not being a "proper Christian."

Field Enterprises Inc.

Lincoln, the Great Hearted

When Abraham Lincoln was practicing law in Springfield he became interested in a young man named George E. Pickett, a nephew of his law partner. He secured Pickett an appointment as a cadet at West Point.

Pickett graduated with honors and was assigned to the Eighth U. S. Infantry.

When the Civil War opened, Pickett, who was a Virginian by birth, cast his fortunes with the South.

On the third day of the battle of Gettysburg Lee determined to risk all on a bold stroke and ordered Pickett, who was now a General, to make a desperate charge which, if successful, would bring victory.

Pickett led the charge with 4,500 men and more than half of them were left on the field dead and wounded.

The war ended and one April day in 1865 Lincoln, with a few friends, went to Richmond, Virginia, to see the late capital of the Confederacy.

The President and his companions proceeded on foot and when the President came to a certain house he stepped up to the front door and knocked. A woman with a baby in her arms came to the door. This is the story the woman tells:

"I opened the door," she said, "and looked up at a tall, gaunt, sad-faced man in ill-fitting clothes, who, with the accent of the North said, 'Is this George Pickett's place?' 'Yes, sir,' I answered, 'but he is not here.' 'I know that, ma'am,' he replied, 'but I just wanted to see the place. I am Abraham Lincoln.'

"The President!" I gasped. The stranger shook his head and said, 'No, ma'am, no ma'am, just Abraham Lincoln, George's old friend.'

"I am George Pickett's wife, and this is his baby," was all I could say.

"I had never seen Mr. Lincoln, but remembered the intense love and reverence with which my soldier always spoke of him. My baby pushed away from me and reached out his hands to Mr. Lincoln, who took him in his arms. As he did so an expression of rapt, almost divine tenderness and love lighted up his sad face. My baby opened his mouth wide and insisted upon giving his father's friend a dewy infantile kiss.

"As Mr. Lincoln gave the little one back to me, shaking his finger at him playfully he said, 'Tell your father, the rascal, that I forgive him for the sake of those bright eyes.' He turned and went down the steps talking to himself, and passed out of my sight forever; but in my memory remain those intensely human eyes, that strong, sad face, that face which puzzled all artists but revealed itself to the intuition of a little child, causing it to hold out its hands to be taken and its lips to be kissed."

and that there-
~~the method to be used. Only great souls~~
~~can stand for peace at any and at all times.~~

3. *Lincoln's generosity.*—Mr. Crittenden, who was assistant Secretary of the Treasury under Mr. Chase, once told a friend an interesting story concerning President Lincoln's conduct at the time of Mr. Chase's resignation. It will be remembered that Mr. Chase prior to his resignation had been very unkind in his own conduct toward President Lincoln and had called him 'the old coward,' 'the old fool,' 'the old gorilla,' and had said the 'Congress ought to impeach him,' and many other things very unbecoming a man in his station.

"It was in connection with this situation that Mr. Crittenden spoke to his friend, as follows: 'I went over to Mr. Lincoln's office that morning and found Mr. Lincoln sitting there with his head down, his chin

on his chest, evidently much depressed. He handed me a letter he had just read. It was Chase's letter resigning. I read the letter and felt overwhelmed and said, "President Lincoln, you must hold Chase to it. You cannot afford to divide the party in such a time as this. You must hold Chase to it." Mr. Lincoln said: "Mr. Crittenden, Mr. Chase has determined the matter, and I will hold him to that." After a few minutes, without lifting up his head, he said: "Mr. Crittenden, Mr. Chase will make a good Chief Justice, and I will appoint him." Mr. Crittenden said to me: 'I had long known and loved Mr. Lincoln but when I saw him that hour, under the sting of personal insult and under the shadow of threatened calamity, put that man into the highest place in the nation, for the good of the Republic, he went up and up and up into an atmosphere of which I never dreamed. He was the greatest man I ever saw.'"—
 Bishop Fowler.

